

One Another – Body Life

Text : **Ephesians 4: 1-16**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Christians serve the only true and living God, the God who is like no other, who is described as being the essence of “love.”

1. **I John 4: 16 – God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**
2. Jesus declared that the most important duty of man was to love God and to love his fellowman. **Matt. 22: 36-40**
3. The Apostle John also taught that one who didn't love had no relationship with God.
I John 4: 8 – The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

B. We learn how to love God by loving His family. (*Created by him in His image.*)

1. **I John 4: 20 – ... the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.**
2. We get instant reinforcement from those with whom directly we interact / love.

C. Over the past weeks our studies have shown us that God places great emphasis on the relationship between Christians.

1. The relationship between brethren is unique in all the world.
2. No matter where we travel we have an instant bond with other members of the body.
3. The industrial and technology revolutions are destroying relationships of all kinds.

D. The church is God's plan for maintaining the relationship He wants in His family

1. When we read about the church in the N.T. it's not at all like we see today.
2. Back then, to become a Christian was to become a social pariah.
3. In spite of intense social pressure, brethren intertwined their lives together.
 - a. They formed a close-knit community in which all functioned as one unit.
 - b. This is what God wanted, but Satan's attacks changed it from God's pattern.
4. The great apostasy occurred.
 - a. The church was cooped by the Roman government.
 - b. Many unconverted people came into the church to win favor with the government.
 - c. The government reorganized the church to make it “more efficiently managed.”
5. The dark ages and the plague enabled a tyrannical clergy to take over the church.

I. We have a long way to go before we restore the church to that which God wants.

A. The entire O.T. presents God's people as a separated community.

1. Sadly, many of our number have stayed superficial in their study of the O.T.
 - a. A depressing number no longer read it.
 - b. Some who do read it view it merely as history.
 - c. Others learn facts from it, but fail to seek discernment.
2. The O.T. was written and preserved to teach us about our relationship with God.

Rom. 15: 4 – For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

 - a. We are to be instructed by the O.T.
 - b. We are to be taught perseverance.
 - c. We are to be encouraged by the O.T.
 - d. Our hope grows out of the O.T. scriptures.

B. The O.T. consistently presents God's people as a called out and separated people.

1. Noah was separated from the wickedness of the world.
2. Abraham was separated from his earthly family to dwell among pagan nations.
 - a. Though he lived among them, Abraham would not become a part of them.
 - b. This was emphasized by Isaac and Jacob both getting wives from their own family
3. In order for the Israelites to become God's people they had to be a separated nation.
 - a. They were called **out** of Egypt to be God's people and kept isolated for 40 years.
 - b. They were instructed to purge the promised land of all who were not God's people.
4. In order to be a part of God's people today one must be "*called out*" from the world.
 - a. The word translated "church" means the called out and that is what God requires.

II Cor. 6: 14-18 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? **15** Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? **16** Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people **17** Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. **18** And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

- b. Solomon of old realized that God's people must stay separate from the world.
I Kings 8: 53 – For You have separated them from all the peoples of the earth as Your inheritance, as You spoke through Moses Your servant, when You brought our fathers forth from Egypt, O Lord God."
- c. In John's prophecy, God was still calling for His people to separate themselves.
Rev. 18: 4 – I heard another voice from Heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;

C. Separation is essential for the preservation of cultural values and identity.

1. Blending in is within the nature of man. *We want to be accepted and liked.*
 - a. The Jews cried out for a king so they could be like the nations round about.
 - b. Now that communication has shrunk the world, observe the trends.
 - 1) America wants to be like Europe and they want to be like us.
 - 2) People openly speak of one world government. (*Haven't changed since Babble*)
- *c. This is why the Lord's Apostle warns us :
I Cor. 15: 33 – Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."
2. Until this day all over the world the Jews still function as a culture within a culture.
 - a. Wherever one goes the Jews are a clearly identifiable subculture.
 - b. In all aspects of their lives they function as a community as well as a religion.
 - c. They help each other, do business with each other, and train each other's children
3. The Amish have a very strange culture and doctrine, but they survive in this age.
 - a. They survive because they separate themselves as a clearly identifiable subculture.
 - b. 95% of those who are separated from the collective never return.
III. – This statistic was compiled during the Vietnam War. Amish were disproportionately targeted by draft boards. Because so many of their youth did not return, the Amish began leaving the country. Many went to Brazil. (100 families by train to gulf and chartered whole boat.)
4. Today the church is being destroyed and slowly absorbed by the world.
 - a. Christians spend more time with the world than with each other.
 - b. The constant exposure desensitizes Christians to the differences in values.
 - c. More and more Christians are developing a taste for the things of the world.
III. – Num. 11: 5-6 We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, 6 but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.

D. In His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge, God instructed His church to function as a community, separate and apart from the world's system.

1. **I Cor. 6: 1-8** ... The church does not even use the world's court system.
 - a. **Matt. 18: 15ff** ... The church has its own dispute resolution system.
 - b. The ultimate penalty / discipline among believers is withholding fellowship.
2. When the Apostle had the need to support himself, he sought out Christians as his business partners. .. **Acts 18: 1-4**

II. Because God requires Christians to function as His “called out” people, as the “ekklesia”, He gave us abundant instructions about how to do it.

A. We must realize that being the “ekklesia” has always been more than doctrine.

1. When by faith we become “birds of a feather”, God expects us to “flock together.”
2. Peter didn't tell the 3000 who were baptized on Pentecost to be sure to come Sunday
3. It is impossible to build community in one or two hours per week. (**1.2% of week**)

B. Every positive example of church in the N.T. reflects community.

1. **Acts 2: 37-47** ... Presents the church as a daily fellowship.
 - a. Some object that such togetherness is just not part of our America culture.
 - b. It was not part of the Jewish culture either .. **but Christians did it. God requires it**
2. Our text (**Eph 4**) explains how we are interdependent upon each other to develop.

C. The relationship between Christians is special ... it's unlike any other on earth.

1. The love-bond between Christians is stronger than one can observe elsewhere.
 - a. **John 13: 34-35** ... It distinguishes the church from the world.
 - b. The love Christians have is strong and without pretense.
I Pet. 1: 22 – Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,
2. This is the essence of our lesson from **Rom. 12: 10**
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

D. The love bond between Christians causes us to treat each other in a special way.

1. **Rom. 15: 7** .. Though there are significant differences, Christians **accept** each other.
2. **Rom. 14: 19** .. Love causes us to **pursue peace** with one another and build up.
3. **Col. 3: 12-13** .. Since we're all growing together, we **forbear** and **forgive** each other
4. **Eph. 4: 32** .. Love is **kind** and Christians practice it to the extreme. **I Cor. 13:4**

E. God gives us instructions about our time together.

1. **Heb. 10: 23-25** .. We are instructed not to **neglect assembling** together. **I Cor 14:26b**
2. **Rom. 16: 16** .. We're often exhorted to **greet** each other warmly and affectionately.
3. **Heb. 3: 12-13** .. We have struggles against sin, but we can count on **encouragement**.
4. **Col. 3: 16** .. None of us have arrived, but we **teach and admonish** each other. **Eph 5**
5. **Heb. 10: 23-25** .. When we are together we **motivate** each other to faithfulness.
6. **II Cor. 12: 25** .. Our love pulls us together so that divisions won't occur and as with our bodies that **same amount of care** is given to every member.

F. Our common love affects the way we treat each other outside of the assembly.

1. **I Cor. 12: 12** .. Each Christian views all other Christian as an extension of himself. Members of one another will **not** :
 - a. **Envy** one another ... **Gal. 5: 26**
 - b. **Judge** one another ... **Rom. 14: 13** (**II Cor. 10: 12** .. Not compare themselves)
 - c. Receive **gossip** ... **I Tim. 5: 19** (*Receiving gossip reflects on the recipient*)
2. Christians who love each other share their lives with each other.
 - a. **Weep** and **rejoice** together .. **Rom. 12: 15** (**I Thes. 4: 18** .. *Comfort one another*)
 - b. **Confess** sins and **pray** together ... **James 5:16**
3. **Gal. 5: 13** ... Love motivates us to be eager to **serve** one another.
 - a. We serve each other because we value each other above ourselves. ... **Phil 2: 3-4**
 - b. Every gift we have received from God is a stewardship for serving. .. **I Pet. 4: 10**

G. All of this transpires between us because we've all become of the "same mind."

1. Each has surrendered self into the whole thus becoming what the whole is.
2. This feeling of commonality enables us to feel comfortable to open our hearts and homes to each other.
3. It enables us to feel comfortable to share our struggles and our fears.

III. As we have considered these commands of God, we cannot help but see that we are falling short of the standard that He has set for us.

A. We have spent generations seeking to perfectly restore the doctrine of Christ.

1. The Pharisees demonstrate to us that just following the doctrine isn't enough.
Mark 7: 6 – And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.'

2. Our obedience must flow from a dedicated heart, one that seeks to please God.
 - a. Obeying commands is much easier than surrendering one's self to God.
 - b. When the Apostle instructed us to be “**crucified with Christ**” (**Gal. 2: 20**) he was instructing us to surrender our individualism and become part of Christ.

B. Christ is the Lord of the Harvest. *Do you want our congregation to grow ?*

1. God is the one who gives the increase. (**I Cor. 3: 6** ... *We only plant and water.*)
2. Jesus is the Lord of the lampstands / Churches.
 - a. **Rev. 1: 12-13, 20 ; 2: 5**
 - b. He removes the lampstand of the churches who do not practice love. (*Ephesus*)

C. If we are to be the light of the world, we must distinguish ourselves from it.

1. According to Jesus (**Jn 13**), that which distinguishes us from the world is love.
2. We must pull ourselves in from the world and dare to be different.
3. The world is clamoring for us to conform,
but it is the function of the church to be different ... to show the way.
 - a. If light becomes darkness, no one can see.
 - b. *We don't endorse Catholic doctrine or recognize the authority of the pope, but the events of this papal elections have emphasized the problem. The world is clamoring for them to change their teaching to become relevant.*
 - c. THE VERY FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH DEMANDS WE BE DIFFERENT.

D. God put us together in His body, the church, to maintain that difference.

CONCLUSION :

A. We have the doctrine down pat. Now we must concentrate on practicing it.

1. We cannot continue to do everything the same and expect change to occur.
2. I implore our elders to provide more times when we are together.
3. I implore each member to take advantage of every opportunity to assemble.

III. - *One Sunday and Wednesday evenings we have a much tighter knit group.*

B. Our text explains that the whole group depends upon every member supplying.

INVITATION :

You can neither supply to nor receive benefit from the body unless you're a member.

Lesson Text :

Ephesians 4: 1-16

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, **3** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. **7** But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. **8** Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." **9** (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? **10** He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) **11** And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. **14** As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even Christ*, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.